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Double Coronation!

Jefferson boys and girls
win 5A basketball tourney

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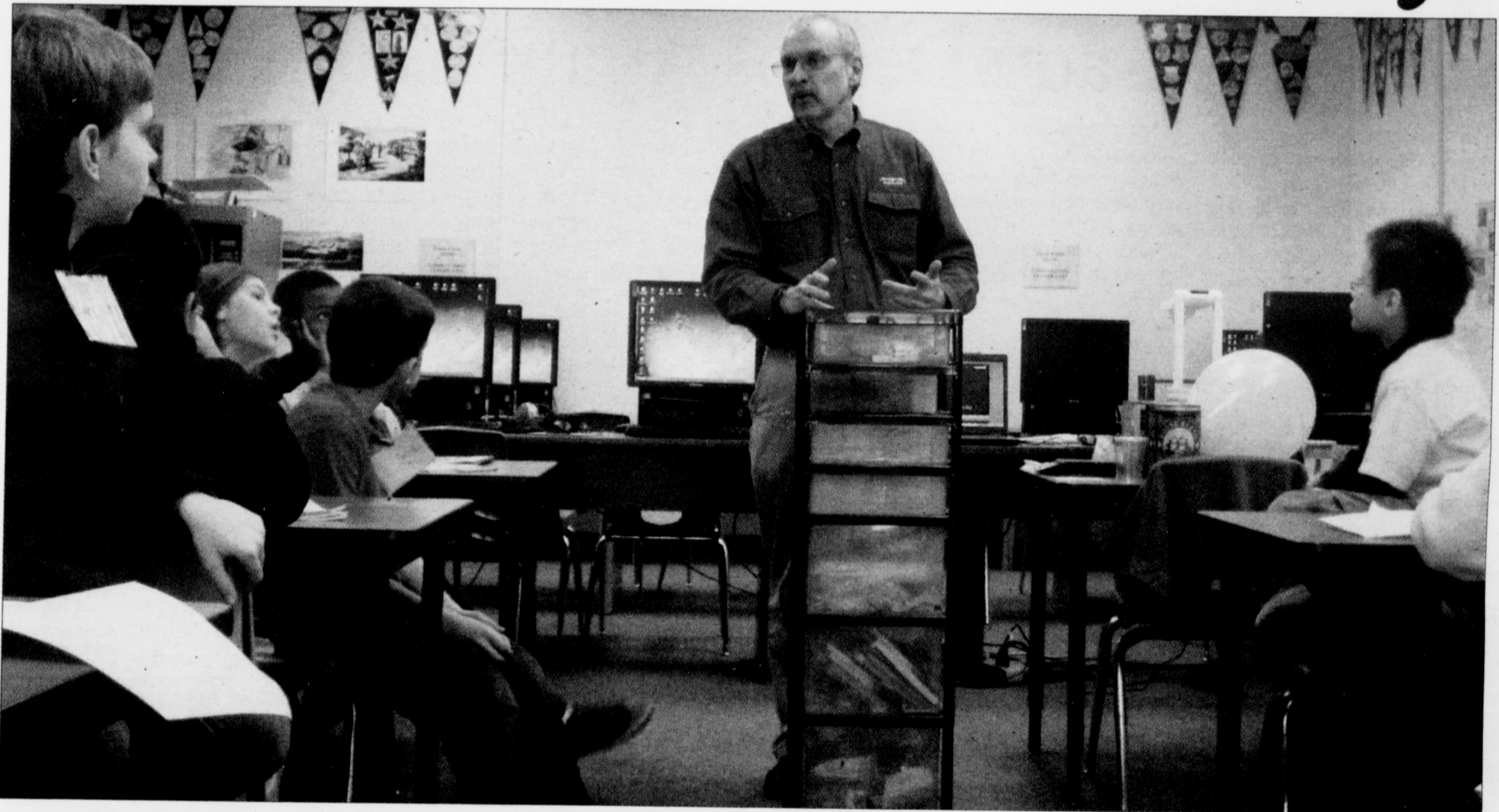


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Classroom Controversy



PHOTOS BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Instructor Roy Chambers leads local kids in a science curriculum at the Air National Guard Base in northeast Portland.

Air Base instruction draws fire

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Roy Chambers, a long-time Portland science teacher, stands before 30 fifth graders explaining the basic principles behind Newtonian physics.

He has a pony tail, a salt-and-pepper mustache, and talks with the cadence you might expect from an aging Grateful Dead fan.

This seems like it could be a typical scene in a classroom, but a handful of Portland activists see it as an under-handed way of recruiting children into the military.

Since 1993, Portland Public Schools has offered fifth grade classrooms the "Starbase" program, which gives kids 25 hours of hands-on teaching in math, science, and engineering. It's funded by the U.S. Department of Defense, and the instruction takes place on an Air National Guard Base on the outskirts of town.

In recent years, parents have complained that program is an insidious effort by the military to

prime young children to join its ranks.

"It's like your typical predator grooming his victims," said Jessica Applegate, the mother of two children who attend Winterhaven K-8 in southeast Portland.

Applegate refused to let her son, who attends Winterhaven K-8 in southeast Portland, participate in Starbase three years ago, and plans to do the same with her fourth-grade daughter.

When she heard about the program, Applegate asked to sit in on a class. She doesn't dispute that science is taught at Starbase, but finds it suspect that it needs to be taught on a military base.

"There was nothing special about it," she said of the curriculum, which she feels could be taught just as easily in any Portland classroom.

Applegate, who describes herself as a "total peacenik," argues that having kids on a military base is intended to warm them up to the idea of

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Portland's Air National Guard Base hosts Starbase Portland, a program to raise the interests and improve the knowledge and skills of at-risk youth in math, science and technology. Critics say it provides a recruiting tool to get children interested in military careers.